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NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

OCTOBER 1952

WASHINGTON, D. C.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

UNITED NATIONS AIDS COUNTRIES TO IMPROVE NUTRITION

HOME ECONOMICS FOR THE CARIBBEAN

Meeting in Trinidad, June 30 to July 5, 36 delegates and observers to a conference on home economics and education in nutrition made 35 recommendations to guide development of home economics programs in the Caribbean area. The Conference was sponsored jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Caribbean Commission.

Consideration was given both to ways in which various territories might assist each other in accomplishing the programs and to the help desired from international agencies.

Professional training for home economists within the region was emphasized as a basic problem. Present opportunities are through the 4-year, degree-giving course at the University of Puerto Rico and the more limited training given elementary school teachers at some of the colleges in the British West Indies.

A 3-month home economics course in English (instead of Spanish) at the University of Puerto Rico was recommended as of immediate value, together with fellowship grants and other aid from FAO. Provision for continuity in professional education (in the English language) was taken care of by two suggestions: (1) Establishment in the Caribbean area of one or more training centers offering a 1-year course in home economics for teachers and other qualified workers, and (2) development of diploma and degree courses in home economics including postgraduate courses in nutrition at the University College of the West Indies. Home economics courses in the curriculum for elementary school teachers, men and women, and other workers in related fields were recommended. The selection, training, and use of local leaders was also urged.

Several recommendations call for action by the Caribbean Commission and UN agencies. Among them are a pilot demonstration on improvement of nutrition by the better use of existing resources and by coordination of services, to be carried out by UN agencies in a selected Caribbean territory; services of a home economist from FAO for 2 years; and a lecture tour by a WHO authority on maternal and child health.

Attending the Conference were representatives of the Caribbean Commission, Barbados, British Guiana, Dominican Republic, Guadalupe, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, Surinam, Tobago, Trinidad, Virgin Islands,

Windward Islands, France, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States of America, UN, FAO, WHO, the Holy See, Colonial Development and Welfare Organization of the British West Indies, Associated Country Women of the World, and YWCA. The Conference elected as chairman a member of the USA delegation, Dr. Lydia J. Roberts of the University of Puerto Rico. It was recommended that conferences on home economics and nutrition be held in the Caribbean area every 3 years.

NUTRITION ACTIVITIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Since its beginning in 1946 the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama has been compiling facts and figures on food habits and nutritional status of people in the region and on nutritive values of local foods. As information accumulates, INCAP is becoming better able to give governments sound, practical advice on programs to improve nutritional levels in their countries and on the training of nutritionists.

Selected projects described in annual and other reports of Director Nevin S. Scrimshaw show the wide range of INCAP's work. The Institute has analyzed and compiled a table showing composition of more than 300 Central American foods. Findings on the influence of genetic and environmental factors on the quality and quantity of protein in local varieties of corn have reached the point of practical application. The selection and distribution to farmers of seed of varieties highest in nutritive value and yield promise far-reaching economic and nutritional effects. Beans and other staple crops are being studied now.

The Institute finds shortage of protein foods of animal origin one of the most common dietary problems in Central America. Working toward a solution of this problem, INCAP is studying the comparative contribution of animal protein, vegetable protein, vitamin B₁₂, and antibiotics to dietary improvement.

Surveys on the incidence of endemic goiter are continuing. A major problem is how to administer iodine effectively, economically, and safely. Provision of iodine by adding it to salt, as practiced in USA, encounters many difficulties because the salt commonly used in Central America is a less refined product and one that absorbs moisture readily.

Knowledge of racial and environmental characteristics of

different population groups has been increased by measurements of a large number of school children for growth in weight and height.

Findings from dietary surveys and from nutritional status studies will be the basis for food and nutrition recommendations to governments and for nutrition education materials. Evaluations have been made of diets of over 4,600 individuals who are considered representative of a substantial portion of the total population in Central America.

A 4-month training course in nutrition, nutrition education, and school lunch administration was conducted by INCAP from February to May 1952 for workers in the area. Also opportunities were provided for five students to obtain degrees through work completed at INCAP.

UNICEF'S CUP OF MILK

UNICEF aid today takes two forms, both aimed at better nutrition of children the world over. One provides milk for child feeding programs. The other provides equipment for conserving and improving the handling of milk.

How milk for children stimulates community interest in good nutrition is shown by the growth of the child-feeding program in Central America. Six countries budgeted the equivalent of \$52,500 for school feeding programs in 1949, when the program started, and \$536,480 in 1951—a tenfold increase in 2 years.

A milk distribution program in Africa is also demonstrating to mothers that what they eat and what they feed their children affects well-being. For treating kwashiorkor UNICEF is providing nonfat dry milk for some 300,000 African children and pregnant and nursing women.

To countries unable to provide their own, UNICEF is supplying equipment and machinery for pasteurizing, bottling, and refrigerating and for drying and other processing of milk. The countries supply such equipment as they can and buildings and labor. The countries' expenditures far exceed UNICEF's contributions.

To get UNICEF's help countries must agree to furnish free or at low cost to children and to nursing and pregnant women a portion, sometimes all, of the plant's output. With UNICEF aid, Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Finland, Italy, Malta, Poland, and Yugoslavia together provide free milk for 3 to 4 million children daily. An even greater number of people are benefitting by having bottled pasteurized milk available at reasonable prices. Two new UNICEF-assisted pasteurizing plants will begin operating in Greece in 1954.

Plans have been approved for plants in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Nicaragua. Israel is receiving the Fund's help for pasteurization and bottling plants, and Iran plans to build a pasteurizing and yogurt-manufacturing plant in Teheran, using UNICEF equipment.

FAO, INCAP, and other international groups, as well as the countries being helped, work hand-in-hand with UNICEF.

HOW FAO WORK GETS DONE

Last October *Nutrition Committee News* listed some of the Technical Assistance Programs that had been approved by FAO to increase the world's food supply and improve nutrition. Current FAO programs are described in "The Work of FAO" and in "Activities of FAO under the Expanded Technical Assistance program." (See Materials.)

Since such programs become realities only when people make them so, we are describing in this issue work in nutrition and home economics of four FAO specialists—Ava Milam in Syria (later in Iraq), Emma Reh in Latin America, Jean Ritchie in Thailand, and Andromache Tsongas Sismanidis in Greece and Turkey (now on duty at the Regional FAO office in Washington, D. C.). The methods these four women used are similar to those used by many other nutritionists and home economists who have carried out technical assignments. They are all helping to improve homemaking throughout the world; accomplishments in one area stimulate and guide work elsewhere.

Getting Ready for an Assignment

Ava Milam was chosen to meet the request of the government of Syria for aid to improve home economics teaching. Before leaving this country, she spent about a month obtaining information about Syria to supplement her experience as dean of home economics at Oregon State College and in educational work in the Far East. She conferred with officials in the Syrian Legation in Washington, interviewed Syrian women students at George Washington and Cornell Universities, and obtained useful information from the UN secretariat.

In Paris Dean Milam learned about the UNESCO program of fundamental education before she saw it in action. She visited an Arab refugee camp and the Sidon School for Girls. In Damascus she observed the homes and conditions in which people live.

Talks with officials of the Syrian Ministries of Agriculture and Education and visits to home economics classes showed Dean Milam that the teachers needed further training. She decided that a workshop was the way to provide it.

The Syrian government selected and paid expenses to the workshop for 72 principals, inspectors of schools, and teachers. Thirty other teachers paid their own way. Together they studied food and nutrition, clothing and textiles, family life, child development, housing and furnishing, home management, and methods of teaching. There were lectures, discussions, demonstrations, and practice and observations in a nursery school.

The workshop stimulated the Ministry of Education to give serious consideration to the teaching of home economics. The home economics teachers spoke as a group, asking for better equipment, smaller classes, and higher pay. Four women have been selected for home economics scholarships. A home economics textbook, the first in Arabic, is being prepared by a Syrian home economist who studied in America sometime ago on a scholarship. It is to be published by FAO.

Following Syria, Dean Milam was sent to Iraq by FAO to help prepare plans for the development of a home economics department at Queen Aliya College in Bagdad. Home economics curriculum plans were prepared for both Queen Aliya College and the secondary schools. To implement these plans, Point 4, Fulbright, and FAO are to send teaching staff to the college this fall.

Training Local Workers to Carry On Program

Emma Reh, assigned by FAO to work with INCAP (see page 1), is working with families to find out about food consumption and food preparation practices in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.

She found that full-blooded Indians in the area follow eating patterns different from those of the mixed-parentage Ladinos who have been influenced by other cultures. She believes that in Central America, culture is a greater force in forming food habits than are economic conditions.

If Miss Reh finds mistrust she works patiently to dispel it. In one "difficult" village she finally won the friendly encouragement of the women and the cooperation of the men in converting a little room back of the school into a kitchen to prepare school meals. The local carpenter and mason built a chimney with a stovepipe running out through the roof—the one and only chimney in this community.

To carry on the work after she leaves, Miss Reh is teaching techniques of dietary surveys to Latin Americans selected from various fields. She tells them *why* she does *what* she does, explaining the *how* of each step. She writes, "Dietary survey work is a broad experience for all kinds of nutrition work—educational, biochemical, and medical. I try to show the school teachers, extension workers, home economists, and nurses on the surveys that nutrition is part of the fabric of life."

Making Surveys Tell the Story

In Thailand, where Miss Ritchie is working, only a third of the population is literate, little money changes hands in villages since there is almost nothing to buy or sell, and actual hunger is rare. Rice is usually the main farm crop. There are many potential fish resources that need development.

Miss Ritchie learned about the dietary patterns and food practices of Thailand along with some of its leaders. In a school she organized for Thai government officials, pharmacists, and college teachers, she included a dietary survey in the basic nutrition course. The purpose was to find out what food the Thai people eat, whether diets fall short of nutritional needs, and how they can be made better. To get the facts Miss Ritchie and her students made a systematic study of food habits. They got up at dawn to be in the homes before breakfast, and made note of all food served during the day. They found that Thai diets tend to be very low in foods important for vitamin A and B vitamins, for calcium, and to a lesser extent, for proteins. Milk is scarce and fats are in short supply.

One outcome of the study was the government's request for FAO assistance to improve through parboiling and enrichment the nutritive content of rice as commonly eaten, and to increase supplies of poultry, eggs, and fish. A nutrition course of postgraduate university standard has already been set up.

Miss Ritchie hopes to erase the notion among nursing women in Thailand that such protein foods as fish, eggs, and milk are not good for them. Some of the methods Miss Ritchie adapts for use in the Thai nutrition program may be found in her FAO publication, "Teaching Better Nutrition."

Building on a Going Program

Mrs. Sismanidis went to Greece at the Greek government's request for FAO help in planning and developing a nutrition program. She has described her work there during 1947 to 1950 in the bulletin, "Nutrition Work in Greece." (See Materials.)

Mrs. Sismanidis' hope that "the work described in this report has helped to sow seeds for future development" is realized. The Greek Government has established a nutrition service in the Ministry of Agriculture, undertaken an expanded extension program in home economics, and is planning a nutrition research laboratory. Greece is also receiving FAO technical assistance for increasing and improving the milk supply and aid from UNICEF in supplying equipment for pasteurization plants. The home economists in the country have formed a Greek Home Economics Association.

From Greece Mrs. Sismanidis went to Turkey to advise the government on its nutrition program. In a survey of Turkish education Mrs. Sismanidis found that 45,000 girls and women, about 7 percent, are enrolled in day or evening home economics courses throughout the country, and that home economics courses are popular with students,

parents, and public officials. Emphasis has been on skills in dressmaking, embroidery, millinery, and flower making.

Mrs. Sismanidis convinced the Ministry of Education of the importance of more teachers with adequate training in order to bring home economics to more girls and women and to give more emphasis to such homemaking responsibilities as food buying and preparation, meal planning, home management, and child care. FAO has been requested to send a home economics education expert to help the Ministry of Education reorganize their program. Plans are under way to send 10 teachers to the United States on Mutual Security Administration fellowships in nutrition, food preservation, and home economics. Also the Turkish Government has established a Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics and asked FAO for one expert to assist in developing this program.

UNESCO GIFT COUPONS

The UNESCO Gift Coupon Plan offers a direct way of giving teachers, students, and scientists in war-devastated or underprivileged countries the exact equipment and materials they need without having to select and ship them. (Leaflet enclosed.)

Several State dietetic associations are contributing through this plan to the Women's University of the Philippines,

supplying teaching films on child care and guidance, raw film stock for making teaching and demonstration films, and laboratory apparatus for nutrition research. In thanking the Rochester (N.Y.) Dietetic Association for UNESCO Gift Coupons worth \$40, the head of the University's Department of Nutrition writes: "A torsion balance can be purchased for this amount. This type of equipment is badly needed in our Food Research Laboratory."

Coupons for needed equipment for economics classes in Kotabato and Isabela (P.I.) High Schools were sent to the Association of Philippine American Women by the Washington (D. C.) Federation of Women's Clubs. The gift of \$100 was matched by the recipient association.

The Organization of American States and UNESCO are preparing primers for adults learning to read. Dr. Guilermo Nannetti of OAS explains that there are some 70 million illiterate adults in Latin America alone. He says, "There is nothing to read because there are no readers and there are no readers because there is nothing to read." One UNESCO Gift Coupon, \$10, will buy six simply written books for the newly literate.

A list of gift coupon projects needing sponsors may be had from Mrs. Elizabeth Beeson; UNESCO, United Nations Building, New York City.

MATERIALS

The publications listed below may be obtained from the addresses given after the name of the publication. The symbol IDS refers to International Documents Service, Columbia University Press, 2960 Broadway, New York 27, N. Y.

THE WORK OF FAO 1950/51. 67 pp. IDS, \$1.00

ACTIVITIES OF FAO UNDER THE EXPANDED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 1950-1951. Outline of Activities for 1952. 76 pp., illus. IDS, \$1.00.

NUTRITION WORK IN GREECE. A. G. Tsongas. FAO Nutritional Studies No. 7. 67 pp., illus. 1951. IDS, 50¢.

KWASHIORKOR IN AFRICA. J. F. Brock and M. Autret. WHO Monograph Series No. 8. 78 pp., illus. 1952.

IDS, \$1.00. Also published as FAO Nutritional Studies No. 8. 78 pp., illus. IDS, 75¢.

US-FAO NEWS LETTER. Newsletter for Conference of Non-governmental Organizations on FAO. Issued by Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, USDA, Washington 25, D. C. (Available to readers of NCN.)

U. S. NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO NEWSLETTER. U. S. Department of State. Periodical. From Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. \$1.00 for 26 issues. Single copy 5¢.

Materials and suggestions for celebrating UN Day, October 24. From National Citizens Committee for United Nations Day, 816 21st St., N. W., Washington 6, D. C.

Prepared by Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, in consultation with the Interagency Committee on Nutrition Education and School Lunch. (The printing of this publication has been approved by the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, July 10, 1952.)